

# The Comic Sans Stele



A Look at the New  
Inscription From  
Bashplemi in  
Comparison to  
The Moabite Stone  
& Kuntillet Ajrud

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1.

The **power law distribution** made Kevin Bacon famous. But it's not just behind small-world networks; it's also the stuff of another law named Zipf. If you reel in an inscribed ancient tablet while fishing in Georgia, Zipf's Law says, the distribution of the characters in its unknown script will follow the power law. Any natural language corpus fragment will.

The recently-published Bashplemi Tablet does not.

2.

"Real data is messy," you may be saying, "especially in small sets." What, you're not saying that? We can talk about Monty Python in a minute. First, look at the ink on plaster ~~inscriptions~~ from my favorite, Kuntillet Ajrud. The frequency distribution is like this:

11	10	8	7	7	7	6	5	5	4	4	4
3	3	3	2	1	1	(	0	0	0	0	)

Gee, is that a character distribution, or what? It's got chunk, texture, and arc, like so many natural pleasures. The BT has 39 uniques out of 60 total. Then in twos and threes.

3.

And it's ugly. Boom, right in the stomach. I could feel something wrong faster than microphones feed back. Faster than I could consciously conceive of what I was doing in looking at it. Kneejerk nausea and plain hatred are the forgery-spotter's most reliable tools. They connect you to a whole life's worth of evidence-gathering. In this case, I was zapped with an old hatred I held close in high school: Comic Sans. The font that's an offensive and inaccurate joke about children, told to children, in an impression of baby's mewl.

4.

Not only is the Bashplemi tablet similarly offensive to the human intellect, it also looks weirdly similar to Comic Sans, itself. It's an alienating effect. An inhuman monoline. The tablet looks like a brick of butter, scooped of with a hot spoon. Neolithic lightsabers did this, one imagines.

Stone pushes back.  
Exertion gives texture.  
Chisels make a V-groove.

But Comic Sans's other name is Dremel.



5.

You know what else has this Dremel Sans look? Something famous. Something with "consensus comfort", these days. The **Mesha Stele**.

I've seen and touched it, in squeeze reproduction, and my repressed doubts about it came home. I don't know how it outran its early troubled reception history. Look at its origin story, it does not make sense. And shouldn't Moabite diverge somehow from biblical Hebrew?

But I can't question the illustrious **Moab Stone**.

That could be so controversial that someone might pay attention to me.

6.

No, it would be better to play it safe. With some comedy comparanda: Monty Python's "Holy Grail."

There's a scene with movie prop Phoenician in a cave. And it looks, next to the Bashplemi tablet... good. It has human texture and even a touch of that V shape. How? Maybe they used manual tools, even if it was in styrofoam or something. We can't know.

But we can know this: academics don't debunk artifacts. Why would they? It takes away useful evidence and damages good careers.

I'll have one of those someday.



Subsistence fishing for  
ancient inscriptions?  
Could "**ordinary peasants**"  
out-clever the finest  
archaeologists that  
**Tblisi State Medical**  
has to offer?

1. Signs on the basalt tablet show similarities with several ancient scripts, and it requires vast knowledge and experience to compile them.

2. People who found the artifact are ordinary peasants, and it would be illogical to think of them as falsifiers. Their financial incentive was insignificant.

3. When those people saw the artifact for the first time, to 'see the inscription better,' they scrubbed the surface with something made of iron (presumably a nail). Fortunately, the scratches caused no changes. Their depth is 0.36 mm, while the depth of carved signs is 1-3 mm. No falsifier would ever do anything like this and render the authenticity of an artifact questionable.

4. Microscopic examination revealed that the inscription

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